

Published by Our Lady of the Angels Region of the
 Secular Franciscan Order in the USA.



SCHEDULE FOR

**POPE FRANCIS' SEPTEMBER 2015
 APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE U.S.**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 (WASHINGTON, DC)
 4:00 p.m. Arrival from Cuba at Joint Base Andrews.

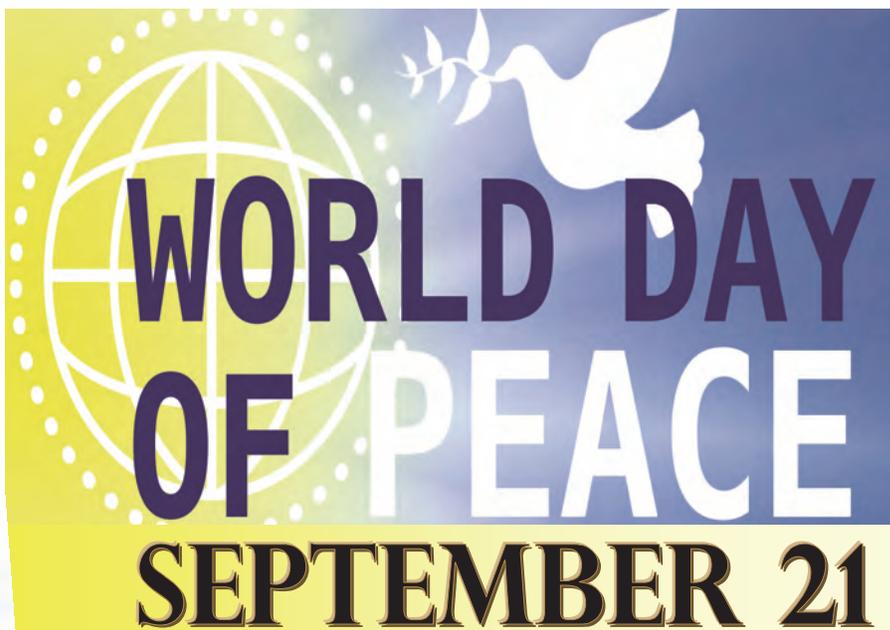
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 (WASHINGTON, DC)
 9:15 a.m. Welcome ceremony and meeting with President Obama at the White House.
 11:30 a.m. Midday Prayer with the bishops of the United States, St. Matthew's Cathedral.
 4:15 p.m. Mass of Concozination of Fr. Junipero Serra, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 (WASHINGTON, DC, NYC)
 9:20 a.m. Address to Joint Session of the U.S. Congress.
 11:15 a.m. Visit to St. Patrick in the City, and Catholic Churches of the Archdiocese of Washington.
 4:00 p.m. Depart from Joint Base Andrews.
 5:00 p.m. Arrival at John F. Kennedy International Airport.
 6:45 p.m. Evening Prayer (Vespers) at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 (NYC)
 8:30 p.m. Visit to the United Nations and Address to the United Nations General Assembly.
 11:30 a.m. Multi-religious service at 9/11 Memorial and Museum, World Trade Center.
 4:00 p.m. Visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels School, East Harlem.
 6:00 p.m. Mass at Madison Square Garden.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 (NYC, PHILADELPHIA)
 8:40 a.m. Departure from John F. Kennedy Intl Airport.
 9:30 a.m. Arrival at Atlantic Aviation, Philadelphia.
 10:30 a.m. Mass at Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul, Philadelphia.
 4:45 p.m. Visit to Independence Mall.
 7:30 p.m. Visit to the Festival of Families, Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 (PHILADELPHIA)
 9:15 a.m. Meeting with bishops at St. Martin's Chapel, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.
 11:00 a.m. Visit to Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility.
 4:00 p.m. Mass for the conclusion of the World Meeting of Families, Benjamin Franklin Parkway.
 7:00 p.m. Visit with organizers, volunteers and benefactors of the World Meeting of Families, Atlantic Aviation.
 8:00 p.m. Departure for Rome.



LETTER FROM OUR REGIONAL MINISTER

AUGUST 11TH

FEAST OF ST. CLARE

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year we were again able to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels together at Mt. Alvernia during our Region Retreat. Since one of the members of our region is writing an article about the particulars of the weekend for this issue, I am going to confine my comments to some observations that come from my heart.

First of all, what a blessing it was to be together in fraternity with so many members of our region! We are well aware that it is a sacrifice

of time and treasure for many of our members to participate in the yearly retreat.

Jesus calls us to come away with Him to rest spiritually and in fraternity with our Franciscan brothers and sisters. However, our lives as lay people with family responsibilities sometimes prevent us from heeding that particular call. Thank you to all of you who were able to be present.



Photography: Diane Menditto, OFS

THESE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS ABOUT OUR RETREAT THAT LEFT ME GRATEFUL, REFRESHED AND INSPIRED:

- The communication and collaboration among the members of the Region Executive Council—almost every member of the Council had a hand in discussion, planning and execution of the retreat.
- The willingness of the retreat participants to take a role in the various liturgies; morning and evening prayer; impromptu dancing and even helping the kitchen staff!
- The beautiful weather, the peacefulness of the retreat center grounds, the hospitality of the center staff, the blue sky, the mountains, the birds and the butterflies, a pooch named Biscuit and even the “invisible” deer ticks made us want to say, *“Laudato Si!”*
- The fact that we are blessed to have among us in our region a Secular Franciscan priest who celebrated Mass for us along with a Secular Franciscan deacon who preached and served as Deacon at Mass. Did you know that we have other members of our region who are deacons or are studying for the Diaconate?
- Being able to get to know more of you by name and face, rather than just your email address or voice on the phone. I enjoyed our conversations!
- The openness of Fr. Tom Hartle who shared some moving personal stories, thus encouraging others to share their own inspirational stories.
- The blessing of knowing that members of our own fraternities and our 2,300 friends on *Facebook* were praying for us. We also assured them of our prayers!
- Knowing that we all prayed for some very special people in our region and in the National Fraternity who were not with us, but were very much in our hearts.
- Knowing that the candidates who attended this retreat had a wonderful session with our Formation Director and our Region Spiritual Assistant. We hope that they went home strengthened in their vocation.
- The wonderful suggestions we received for making the retreat even better next year! Thank you!
- And, last, but never least, the bounty of snacks you all brought!

Oh dear! Prayer, yes! Fasting?—hmmm.

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LETTER FROM OUR REGIONAL MINISTER *continued*

HERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT RETREATANTS WERE KIND ENOUGH TO SHARE ABOUT THEIR FRATERNITIES:

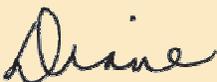
DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- **Sacred Heart Fraternity** in Yonkers was once an all-women's fraternity? It is now co-ed and has some wonderful programs and apostolates including work in the parish Thrift Shop and beautiful processions.
- Although **St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity**, Staten Island, was homeless for a short while, they have found a new home and are thriving? They meet together in hope and joy and truly love each other as Franciscan sisters & brothers.
- **St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity**, 96th Street in Manhattan, stands out for its diversity--ethnic groups, languages, age, gender and academic background? When this fraternity was founded, its sponsoring fraternity was MOST HOLY NAME—then located in Garfield, NJ. St. Mary of the Angels now sponsors a newly forming group—**ALL SAINTS (EM) FRATERNITY** located in Harlem, NY. A very active fraternity, they adopt a family at Christmas and one of their members rescues homeless cats.
- **St. Anthony Fraternity**, Butler, NJ, “rose from the ashes” and was reborn in 1995? Fraternity members have ranged in age from 14 (pre-new Rule) to 100. The fraternity records go back to the 1890's! This fraternity sponsors a child from Guatemala.
- **Assumption Fraternity**, Wood-Ridge, NJ, is 51 years old? At the beginning, they had 175 professed members! The only remaining founding member serves as the fraternity's secretary. This group has traveled to Assisi and more recently, viewed the manuscripts of St. Francis on display in the USA.

- **Most Holy Name Fraternity** in Little Falls, NJ, was founded in 1926?
- **Sts. Elizabeth and Louis Fraternity**, Manhattan, is made up of peaceful people who are like a little Franciscan Garden to this member? Another member says they are very “close-knit.”
- **Little Portion Fraternity**, Mt. Vernon, NY, raised \$3,000 to help Secular Franciscan formation in China?
- **St. Peter Fraternity**, Somerset, NJ, makes its presence known in the Metuchen Diocese through the service of its members in parishes and outreach ministries? One of their members was recently ordained a Deacon.
- Members of **Cortesia Fraternity** in Middletown, NJ, have members who have gone on Mission to El Salvador? They also work among young adults trying to promote vocations to the Order. Another apostolate is preparing “gourmet” meals for the local soup kitchen—then they sit down with the clients and share the meal and some good conversation.
- **St. Francis Fraternity**, Hackensack, NJ, which began life in 1926 as an Italian-speaking fraternity, has among its apostolates the yearly collection of school supplies to be sent to the mission schools in the Southwest of the USA? The parish Youth Ministry collaborates with them in this effort.
- **Porziuncola Fraternity**, East Hanover, NJ, is on the upswing? Their minister (the only male member) drops off vocation brochures in any churches he visits. They have three possible new members due to this effort. Good idea!

Wow! My heart is always joyful when I think of all of you. How blessed we are to have such a wonderful region. Please keep sharing your triumphs and your challenges with us. We are always here for you.

May God bless each one of you and keep you strong in your vocation.



Diane F. Menditto, OFS, Minister, Our Lady of the Angels Region



**OUR LADY
OF THE ANGELS
2014-2017
REGIONAL
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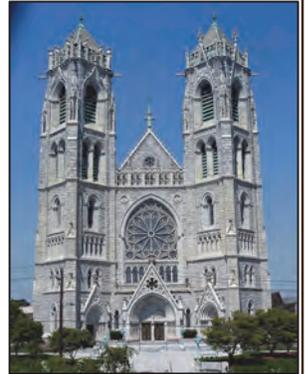
SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT:
Bro. Doug Soik, OFM Cap
dsk2131948@yahoo.com

2015 REGION CALENDAR

GENERAL MEETINGS

NAFRA CHAPTER MASS **THE ENTIRE REGION IS INVITED TO ATTEND.**

OCTOBER 15, THURSDAY - 5:30 p.m.
THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART
CELEBRANT: BISHOP CRUZ
89 RIDGE STREET
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07104



OLTAR ANNUAL CHAPTER — DETAILS TBA **NOVEMBER 7, SATURDAY — MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

MANHATTAN CLUSTER MEETING
Saturday, September 12 — 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Amelia Jalandoni, OFS will facilitate the meeting.
Fr. Andrew will talk about Pope Francis' encyclical,
Laudato Si during the first half of the meeting.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish House, in the Clare Room.
135 West 31st St., New York, NY 10016
Contact: Pat Clayton, OFS, Region Manhattan Councilor
Phone: 917-502-9895 • **Email:** Reap.clayton@gmail.com



ST. FRANCIS FEAST DAY CELEBRATIONS

**If your fraternity is planning an event for the feast day
of St. Francis, please send me the details. E-mail to:**

TroubadourEditor@aol.com



**If enough events are submitted, a special e-blast mailing
will be sent to the membership at the end of September.**

—EDITOR

GENERAL INFORMATION



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DIANE F. MENDITTO, OFS

REGION WEBSITE
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PEGGY LEDGER, OFS

YAHOO GROUP
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FACEBOOK ADMINISTRATOR



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Our-Lady-of-the-Angels-Region-Secular-Franciscan-Order/257320867672618>

DIANE F. MENDITTO, OFS

REGION DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR
ANNA GERACI, OFS

The Troubadour newsletter is a communications vehicle published by Our Lady of the Angels Region. It is published in 2 formats— printed and electronically.

- The printed version named, *The Troubadour*, is published twice yearly in March and October. It is mailed free to all professed members and Candidates of the region.
- The electronic version named, *e-Troubadour*, is published monthly and is available on our Region website or by email only. It is available to all professed and Candidate members of the region with e-addresses from our database.
- If you do not have computer access to a website, it is recommended that you speak with your fraternity Minister.
- Please notify me if you have a change in your name, address, phone, e-mail address or membership status. Please fill out the form below and surface mail to Anna Geraci, OFS, 161-B Cross Slope Ct., Manalapan, NJ 07726, or e-mail: TroubadourEditor@aol.com Please write **TROUBADOUR** in the subject line.
- Note that all changes submitted are also applied to the NaFra database which we maintain for our region. If you are a professed member or Candidate and are currently not receiving a copy of the *Tau-USA* National newsletter, please notify me.

—EDITOR

• CALL FOR ARTICLES •

Wherever you see the spirit of Saint Francis at work in the world, in your lives, in your fraternity, in it's members and in your hearts—we want to hear from you. Come, share with us.

• DEADLINES •

The Troubadour / e-Troubadour format is published on the 1st week of the month. All submissions for the next issue must be received by the 15th of the preceding month.

Submissions for the next issue of the Troubadour, October 2015, are due by September 15th.

• ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS •

• The right to copy all material printed in the *Troubadour* is granted provided you credit the *Troubadour* and author.

• Not every article received may be published in the upcoming issue. Every consideration is given for publication in a future issue.

• When submitting articles for publication consideration, please state fraternity name and location, as well as your name and address.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

Please change (or add) the following information to the region database:

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

E-mail address

Fraternity Name and Location

Date of Profession

Date of Admission

by
ED WOJCIECHOWSKI, OFS
Formation Director
OLTAR Region
edwojo@yahoo.com

CALL TO CONVERSION AND HOPE

IN THE ENCYCLICAL *LAUDATO SI*, POPE FRANCIS PUTS FORTH MANY OF THE ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES FACING THE EARTH TODAY INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE, POLLUTION, CLEAN WATER ISSUES AND THE LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY.

Creation is facing these challenges because we have become a self-centered, throwaway society with the poor and marginalized suffering the most from the devastating environment changes seen over the past few decades. (218 *Laudato Si*)

Pope Francis tells us that we must “*examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart.*” (218 *Laudato Si*)

The life of a Secular Franciscan is based on an intimate relationship with God, with humanity and with all creation. Franciscans have always been at the forefront of environmental issues since our humble beginnings. We see protection of creation as an obligation because we recognize the hand of our Creator in all of creation.

Care for creation is not an option for a Secular Franciscan, but rather it is essential to our lives as penitents. As part of our conversion journey, we must recognize and acknowledge our faults and failings and take concrete actions to change our lives. We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart so that we can heal the wounds we have inflicted on our earthly home. Ongoing conversion calls for a change in our attitude to foster a spirit of care and concern for all creation. We must recognize that the earth is God’s gift for everyone to share and preserve for future generations. We can do this by fostering “a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods” (*Rule 2:11*) and by simplifying our material needs. We need to renew our spirit of stewardship for Creation and purify our hearts “from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.” (*Rule 2:11*)

Nourished by the Eucharist, we find the strength to persevere in our conversion so that we can come to understand our “responsibility within creation” and our “duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part” of our faith. (64 *Laudato Si*)

Pope Francis challenges us as Franciscans to live our Rule with the confidence of a loving and caring God who “does not abandon us” and “does not leave us alone”. (245 *Laudato Si*) For through God’s love, “our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.” (244 *Laudato Si*) By living a life of joy and hope in the spirit of Francis and Clare, we can move with confidence towards a life of unity with all God’s Creation.

FROM THE EDITOR



WELCOME

It is with great joy that I welcome our new contributing editor to the staff of the OLTAR region communications team for *The Troubadour* and *e-Troubadour* newsletters, Deacon Thomas Luke Conroy, OFS.

Deacon Luke will be writing our new column, *Spiritual Tidings*. No doubt most of you will have read, and I'm sure enjoyed, his earlier article contributions and found him to be a gifted writer. It is no wonder then, that when

prompted by the Holy Spirit to seek a spiritual columnist, I didn't have far to go. When approached with my invitation to write a monthly column, Deacon Luke thoughtfully considered the matter. Thankfully for us all, he finally agreed, though I'm sure it is at the added expense of his limited free time. Thank You Deacon Luke!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many of you who have submitted some wonderful articles. I especially enjoy the collaborations we've shared after my initial contact requesting or regarding an article. I am especially thrilled when I see fraternity members work together to produce a single article. Someone recently shared with me the news that several fraternities have stated that our newsletter, "unites all of us together in the region." As honored as I am in hearing this, I'd like everyone to remember that none of this would be possible without your cooperation. Ours is a team effort. So keep the articles, the suggestions and the monthly submissions coming and don't be surprised when, the "*Troubadour Lady*" as I hear I'm called, sends you an e-mail invitation, or gives you a jingle on the phone. May God Bless each and everyone of you abundantly, and grant you His Peace.

Anna Geraci, OFS
EDITOR

Deacon Luke is known by many who regularly attend our regional functions, but I asked him to tell us a little bit about himself so we could get to know him better. Along with his wife, Nancy, they are members of the St. Benedict the Moor Fraternity in New York City. Over the years, both husband and wife have served in various positions on their local fraternity council. Nancy is currently serving her 1st term in office as our regional vice-minister. Prior to that she served the regional council for three years as Formation Director.

DEACON THOMAS LUKE CONROY, OFS

“I was born in Englewood Hospital and grew up in Demarest, NJ; the youngest of three children. Childhood interests included stickball, baseball, hockey, sports, comic books and superheroes. My first encounter with Franciscans was as a student at St. Francis College on the coast of Maine. After graduation, I served in the US Air Force for 4 years. Beginning in college, my life drifted away from the Catholic Church for 13 years. My journey back began with an ad in the NY Daily News about the *Come Home Program* at St Francis Church on West 31st in Manhattan. Fast forward to today: I'm an ordained deacon in the Archdiocese of New York serving at St. Ann Church in Nyack. My wife, Nancy, and I have been Secular Franciscans for over 25 years. We have a beautiful daughter, Anya, and a wonderful black Labrador named, Kirby.”

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

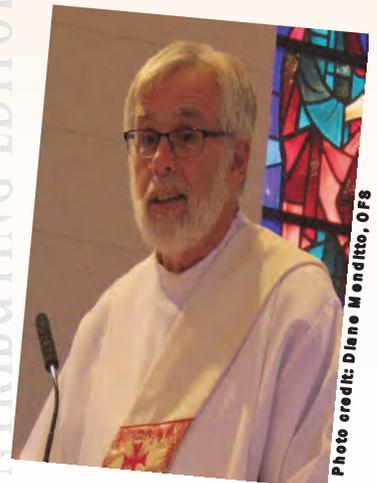
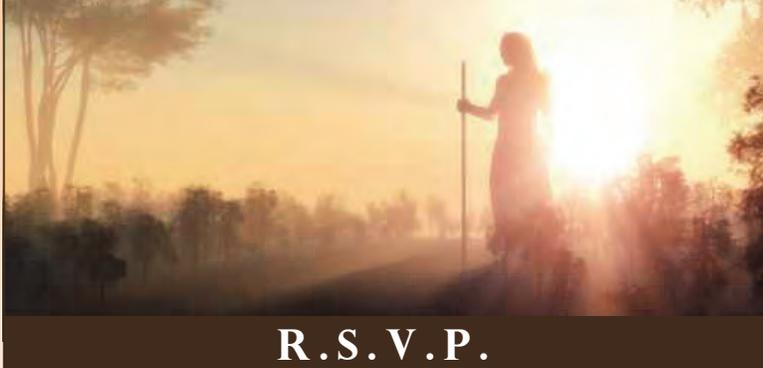


Photo credit: Diane Menditto, OFS

**DEACON
THOMAS LUKE
CONROY, OFS**

SPIRITUAL TIDINGS



R.S.V.P.

by
DEACON LUKE CONROY, OFS
St. Benedict
the Moor Fraternity
New York City, NY

A few weeks ago the Church celebrated the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. What initially surprised me that Sunday was how brief the Gospel reading was. This is what was proclaimed:

“The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.’ People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When He disembarked and saw the vast crowd, His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.” Mk 6: 30-34

What the evangelist is doing here is setting the stage for the feeding of the five thousand. That is evident by the story that follows this. But in order to become aware of the challenge presented here we must consider the text which precedes Mk 6: 30-34. Chapter six of the Gospel of Mark is absolutely action packed. In studying this Gospel one becomes aware of Mark’s penchant for what we would call “duplicate narratives” and many of his expressions suggests a deliberate parallelism, where actions that Jesus performs mainly in Jewish territory are paralleled among the Gentiles. Consider what is taking place in Mk 6: 16-29. Within these verses we find ourselves attending a banquet where there is court intrigue and human weakness; fear is in the air; we are introduced to a scorned woman, Herodias, a seductive young dancer (Herodias’ daughter), the powerful and elite members of Galilean society, the weak-willed king (Herod Antipas), and a ruthlessly efficient executioner. Behind this all stands John who remains the faithful prophet who stands up for the Torah, accusing Herod of an illegal marriage, and dies for his bold witness.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FOR MEDITATION:

The feeding of the five thousand is dramatically juxtaposed to the macabre banquet of Herod.

Herod’s banquet is a birthday celebration for a select upper class and held in a fortress-palace; the banquet offered by Jesus is for ordinary folk and held on the green grass for those who come on foot from the various towns.

Herod’s banquet begins with Herodias’ grudge against John, and Jesus’ banquet starts with his compassion for the hungry crowds.

Herod gives orders that John should be executed, whereas Jesus gives orders that the crowd should be fed. The two banquet scenes become a profound study of the contrasting avenues that are presented to all of us well into the Twenty-First Century.

There is the banquet that the world presents to us where there is a craving that is mistaken for love which seeks power and rank, fame and personal fortune, but ultimately leads to death.

There is also the banquet that Jesus invites us to attend; where the hungry are looked upon with compassion and then fed by the Word and by the Bread; a beautiful foretelling of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist that we are invited to.

Years later, probably while considering the compassion Jesus had for those who were hungry and who suffered from the scorn of society’s power brokers, Paul would write:

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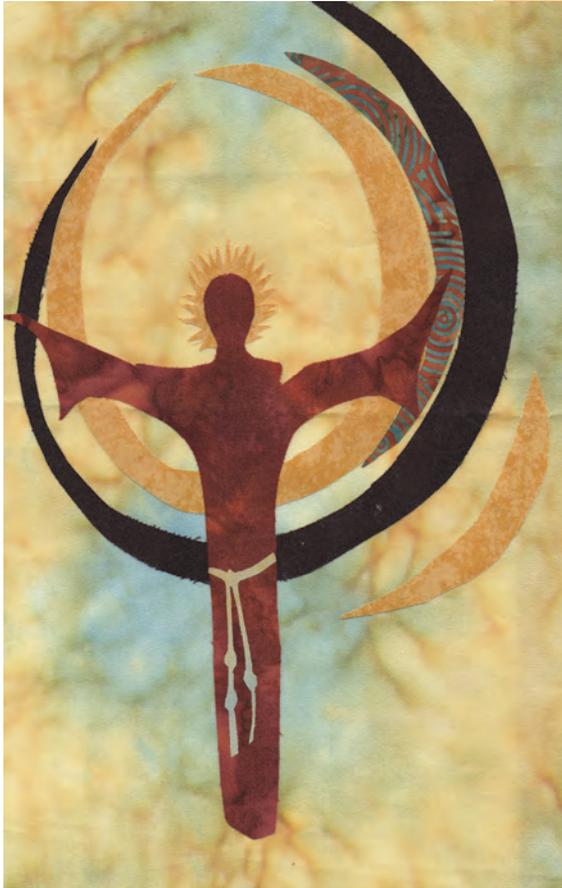


Photo credit: Mary-Frances Reavey, OFS

THE TRANSITUS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2015

6:45 p.m. (after 5:30 p.m. Vigil Mass)

St. Matthias Church

170 JFK Blvd., Somerset, New Jersey

DEACON SAL BONFIGLIO, OFS — PRESIDER

Each year on October 3rd at Sunset, Franciscan men and women all over the world gather to commemorate a touching event in the life of St. Francis. It is called the **TRANSITUS**, his passage from earthly life to everlasting life. Francis died on the evening of October 3, just as the brothers were singing the verse from his Cantic of the Sun:

“Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living person can escape.”

COME JOIN US IN PRAYER.

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

ST. PETER’S FRATERNITY

**For further information, call Mary-Frances Reavey, OFS
732-545-6425 • mfreavey@gmail.com**

continued from page 8

“Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Recall the choice Francis of Assisi once had to make concerning venues: As he slept one night, someone spoke to him in a vision and asked him with concern where he was going. He explained his plan and said he was going to Apulia to become a knight. The other questioned him anxiously:

“Who can do more for you, the servant or the Lord?”
“The Lord,” said Francis. “Then why do you seek the servant instead of the Lord?”

A very good question. And the same is asked of all of us.

Let us heed the Psalmist’s words:

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;

for His steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress; He led them by a straight way, till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies those who are thirsty and the hungry He fills with good things.” *Psalm 107: 1-9*

Both the banquet of the world and the banquet of Jesus extend to us an “RSVP”. Shall we place ourselves over others or shall we wash their feet? Shall we live for self or shall we die to self? Mark’s study in contrast really gives us something to think about.

R. S. V. P.



FRATERNITY SPOTLIGHT

Photos credit: St. Francis Fraternity, Ringwood, NJ



by
NANCY IHNAT, OFS
St. Francis Fraternity, Ringwood, NJ

☪ ☪ ☪
ST. FRANCIS
FRATERNITY

THE FRATERNITY WAS
 FOUNDED IN 1989.

THE FRATERNITY IS LOCATED
 IN RINGWOOD, NEW JERSEY.

**FRATERNITY MEETINGS
 ARE HELD**

ON THE 3RD SUNDAY
 OF THE MONTH,
 9:30 A.M. — NOON P.M.

LOCATION

HOLY NAME FRIARY
 2 MORIS STREET
 RINGWOOD, NJ 07456

MINISTER:

NANCY IHNAT, OFS

CONTACT EMAIL:

stfrancisforringwood@gmail.com

WEBSITE:

[http://
 www.stfrancisfraternityringwood.org/](http://www.stfrancisfraternityringwood.org/)

St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity has been meeting at the Holy Name Friary since its establishment in 1989.

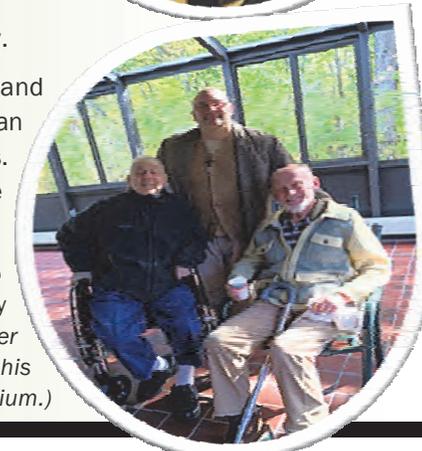
Our main apostolate, among many, is dedicated to the support of the Holy Name Friary Nursing Home Community operated by the Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Most Holy Name in Ringwood State Park, in northern New Jersey.

How does one begin to describe the love of the community of Friars that we are so blessed with in sharing our spirituality, friendship, love and laughter?

Our hope and vision is to spread the word of Christ and to “Live Our Lord’s Gospel,” to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit into a “Call to Holiness”, and to “Encounter Christ” in our every day lives in prayer and charity.

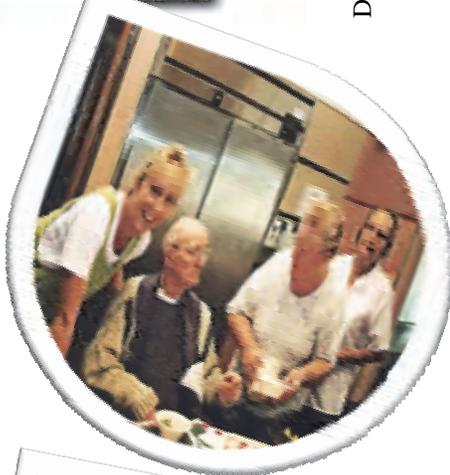
We are very grateful for the kindness and generosity of sharing our Secular Franciscan Community with the Franciscan Friars. Please see our website for many more heartfelt memories.

Opposite—On October 19, 2014, Mario Sheldon celebrated his Profession in the Holy Name Chapel by Father Jack Kull. *(photo of Father Jack and Brother Tom Ennis with Mario after his profession in the Solarium.)*





Drawing by Fr. Philippus Philippus, OFM Cap,



SISTER



DEATH



FATHER CASSIAN A. MILES, OFM
Called home to the Lord
†August 20, 2015.

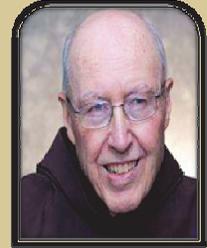


Photo credit: HNP

1929–2015

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on August 24 for Father Cassian A. Miles, (85) a professed Franciscan friar for 60 years and a priest for 54. Provincial Minister Kevin Mullen, OFM, was the principal celebrant and Christopher Keenan, OFM, was the homilist. Burial at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Totowa, N.J. immediately followed.

Born on October 16, 1929, to Francis and Anna Miles, Cassian was baptized Francis at St. Lawrence's Church in Weehawken, N.J. After studying philosophy and theology, he professed solemn vows in 1958 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1961.

His first assignment was to Archbishop Walsh High School in Olean, N.Y., where he taught English and religion from 1962 to 1966. He then moved to St. Bonaventure Friary in Paterson, N.J., where he led retreats for the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Program and, in 1968, started working for St. Anthony's Guild. Two years later, he was named assistant director of the Provincial Communications Office and oversaw production of *This Week*, the Provincial newsletter (now *HNP Today*). After 15 years, he was named director of communications, as well as Provincial Secretary. He served in these capacities until 1988, when he began work for the development office as coordinator of publications. During this time, he authored and edited the popular liturgical aid, *Alert to God's World*, a collection of brief commentaries on scripture readings for weekday Masses, and two books on St. Anthony.

In addition to his communications duties, Fr. Cassian provided counseling services and taught adult education at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in New York City. He also continued his work in Worldwide Marriage Encounter for the Archdiocese of New York and was a confessor and spiritual director from 1970 to 2005.

After 35 years of communications ministry, Fr. Cassian retired in 2005 and moved to Assumption Friary in Wood-Ridge, N.J., where he was senior associate friar in residence. In 2006, he was appointed spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans. After a brief stay at Holy Name Friary in Ringwood, from 2008 to 2009, he moved to St. Anthony Friary in Butler, N.J., where he lived until he transferred back to Holy Name Friary in January.

Throughout his retirement, Cassian continued to assist the Communications offices by editing the Province's newsletter and *The Anthonian*, and other special projects. In 2011, *Mychal's Message*, an organization named after the late Mychal Judge, OFM, announced the creation of the *Father Cassian A. Miles, OFM, Jubilee Scholarship Fund* in honor of the 50th anniversary of Cassian's and Mychal's Ordination.

— COMPILED BY MARIA HAYES AND CAROLYN CROKE, HNP

A moving video tribute to Fr. Cassian by Kelly Ann Lynch was posted on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-ViYPYF3HO>

Thanks Donna Samuel, OFS for sending this clip.

—Editor



SISTER DEATH



by
PETER MACALUSO, OFS
St. Anne's Fraternity
Fair Lawn, NJ



FATHER ROY M. GASNICK, OFM

Called home to the Lord † July 24, 2015.

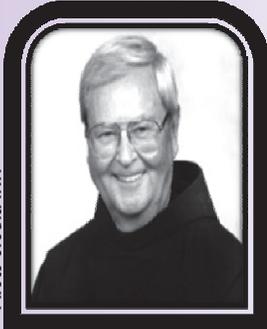


Photo credit: HNP

1933–2015

On a December afternoon in 1950, 16-year-old Roy was a Franciscan seminarian from Garfield, NJ, who was summoned to the Rector's office in St. Joseph's Seminary in Callicoon, NY. Based on a doctor's evaluation concerning his fainting he was asked to leave. Stunned he returned home, but Roy's strength and conviction of his vocation were never in doubt. A few Franciscan priests including the Provincial persuaded the Rector who by telegram asked Roy to return. — Father Roy was ordained in 1960 and carried the telegram constantly for over 30 years until it disintegrated.

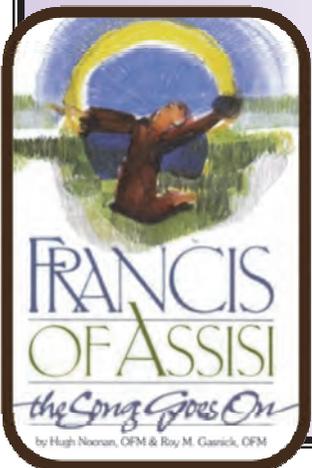
Father Roy taught English Rhetoric and Literature and was the Director of Student Activities and moderator of the Third Order at St. Bonaventure University for 8 years. He was an early activist in the civil rights movement in the 1950's and founded, "Action for Interracial Understanding" within the Secular Franciscan Order in 1961, and marched in Washington with Martin Luther King, Jr. ("I have a dream") in 1963. He spent 18 years as the founding Director of Communications for the Franciscan Province of the east coast Holy Name Province headquartered in New York City, during the turbulent years following the Second Vatican Council. He was also moderator of the Third Order. His ministry drew him to collaboration with all sorts of media relating to Franciscan and Catholic projects.

In 1985, he was named Vice President of Public Relations at Franciscan Communications, a film and audio/visual production center in Los Angeles. Two years later, he became the Spiritual Assistant for the Secular Franciscans in the mid-south area of the Province for six years. He led the successful drive together with Congressman Peter Rodino (D.NJ) to have the U.S. Postal Service issue a St. Francis of Assisi Commemorative stamp in 1982, a groundbreaking achievement in that a Catholic saint was honored by the Postal Service despite opposition and protest.

He also headed the national coordinating committee uniting for the first time all the various U.S. Franciscan entities for the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis in 1982.

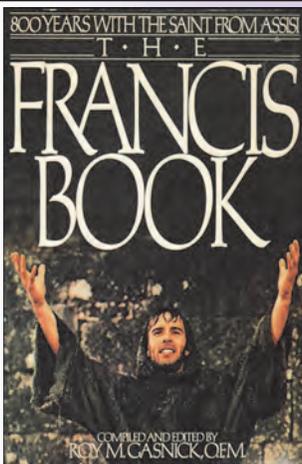
I **NTO YOUR HANDS, O LORD,**
we humbly entrust our brothers,
FATHER ROY M. GASNICK, OFM,
FATHER CASSIAN A. MILES, OFM.

In this life You embraced them with
Your tender love; deliver them now from
every evil and bid them eternal rest.
The old order has passed away:
welcome them into paradise, where
there will be no sorrow, no weeping
or pain, but the fullness of peace
and joy with Your Son and the Holy
Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

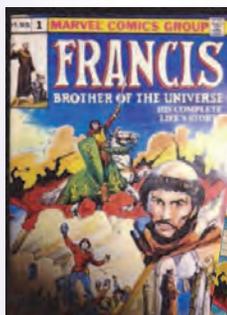


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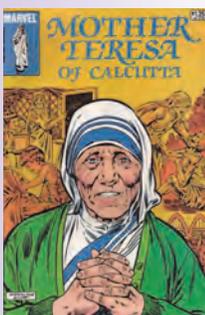
A popular lecturer, preacher and retreat master, Father Gasnick's published works include the best-selling, *The Francis Book*, published by Macmillan;



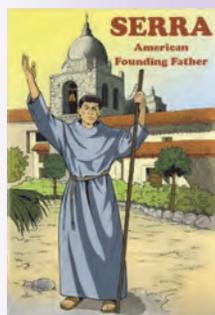
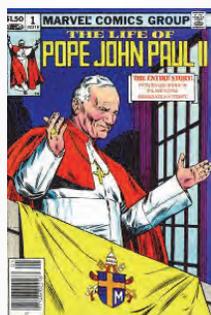
Francis, Brother of the Universe, and the Spanish version:



Francisco, Hermano Del Universo;



Mother Teresa of Calcutta;



the Life of Pope John Paul II; and *Serra, American Founding Father*, published by Marvel Comics.

In 1988, he won the Catholic Press Association's award for best book of the year (Youth category) for his comic book on Mother Teresa.

His *St. Francis* Comic book is Marvel Comic's all-time bestseller, with more than one million copies in print and translated into several languages.

In 1988, he received The Catholic Library Association's John Brubaker Memorial Award, "in recognition for his outstanding contribution to library literature."



SENIOR MOMENTS

by **VALERIE MORENO, O.F.S**
St. John Vianney Fraternity
Colonia, NJ

In white gown and cap, we filed through the cafeteria aisles marking our time here nearly over. Some of us joked, others sniffled and cried. The jukebox was silent-- it was time for new music again.

Rain soaked us in our outdoor ceremony, awards given quickly as we shivered applause competing with the downpour. Diploma in hand, Congratulations! We toss our hats in the air, acknowledging the unknown.

Hugs and parties followed, years took us away from structured time and telling-- College for some, nursing or working, our paths wove away from one another bathed in sweet memories.

Now, I am a senior too, but this classroom has no tests, no multiple choice on blurry mimeo paper. Tenacity, resilience and tears have been my report, grading each decade-- wife, mom, grandma, widow, writer, dreams and darkness vying for completion.

Not yet, I am very much alive, vibrant. music plays continually on my soul jukebox, stronger than the one at school.

I choose the songs, the words, mantras I live by, understanding I know so little of the voice that wakes my heart so I can dream.

FRATERNAL TIDINGS

congratulations

ELECTIONS & PROFESSIONS

Election results of August 3, 2015

**Most Holy Name Fraternity
Little Falls, NJ**

Council as pictured in photo:

L-to-R:

Sr. Janice John, SMIC, Spiritual Assistant;
Fr. Sam Monaco, OFS, Minister;
Joe Wickham, OFS, Vice Minister;
Debbie Wickham, OFS, Treasurer;
Joe Wilson, OFS, Formation Director;
Agnes Czaplinski, OFS, Secretary.



Photo credit: Diane Menditto, OFS

Simple Prayer for Vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order

by
DIANE MENDITTO, OFS
Regional Minister
OLTAR Region

GOD OUR FATHER,
each day lay Catholics and diocesan clergy
pray to be inspired in their love of You.
They wonder if there might be a way to deepen that love.
With open hearts, we come to you and ask that
You will inspire these faith-filled people
to seek to follow You in the footsteps of
St. Francis of Assisi as Secular Franciscans.
With Your help, we promise to set a good example
and to nurture their vocations
if they choose to come to our fraternities.
We ask all this in Jesus' name.
Amen.



RETREAT 2015

Photos credit: Diane Menditto, OFS

MINISTER



DIANE MENDITTO

Last month, 60+ members of Our Lady of the Angels Region gathered at Mount Alvernia in Wappingers Falls, NY, for our Annual Retreat.

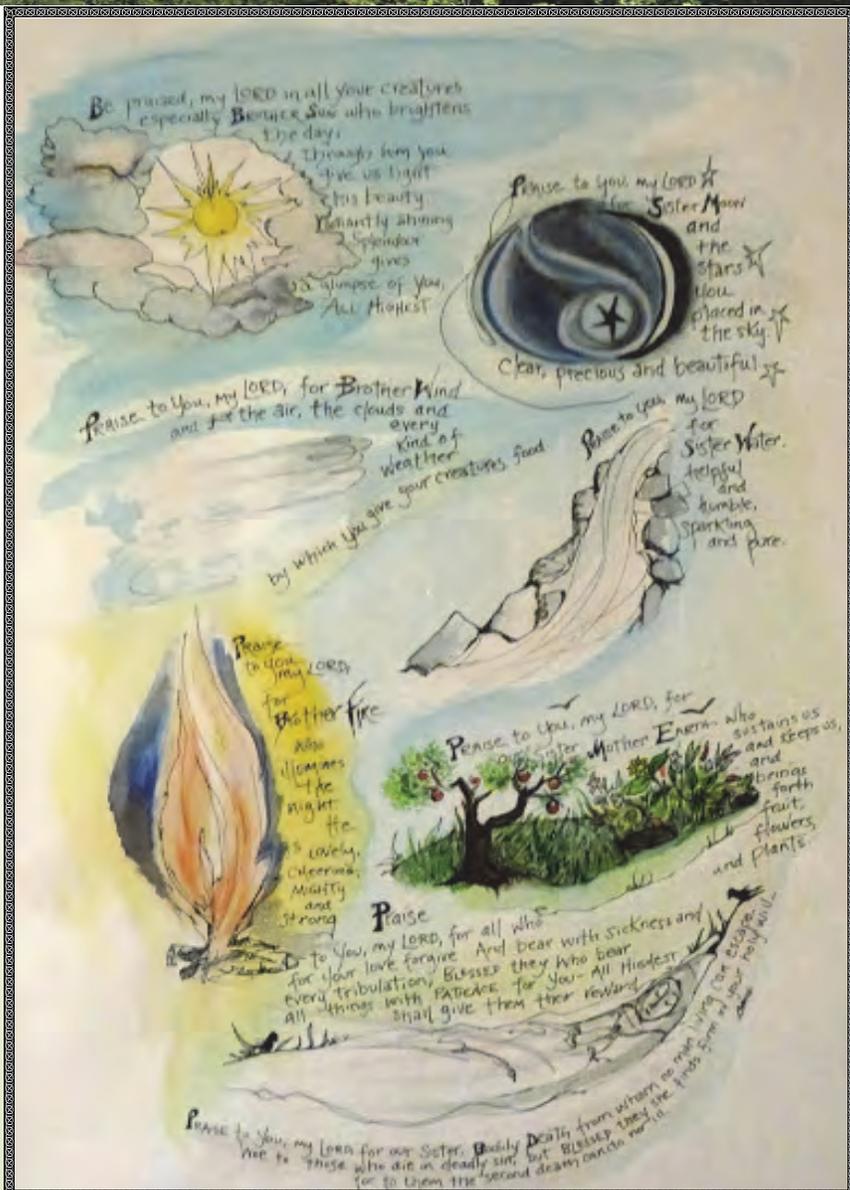
We had a wonderful weekend of fraternity, fun, inspiration and spiritual nourishment.

We thank Fr. Tom Hartle, OFM, the staff of Mount Alvernia and our Region Executive Council for all of their hard work to make this retreat a success.

If you were there, perhaps you would like to relive the weekend through pictures. If you were not there, we missed you, and we want you to share in the experience.

Pictures are available for viewing on our Region Resources page:

http://olangels.tripod.com/region_links.html



RETREAT 2015

RETREAT SURPASSES ALL EXPECTATIONS

by
CHRISTINE LUKESH, OFS
St. Anthony Fraternity
Butler, NJ

It seemed almost too good to be true: after a Friday night rush hour's worth of heavy traffic and Garmin-prompted rerouting, my Secular Franciscan brothers Ed and Andy and I had arrived at Mount Alvernia in Wappingers Falls, New York, for our third shared regional retreat of Our Lady of the Angels.

The transition was a sudden one to the setting of Assisi-like architecture, beautifully kept grounds—and blessed, quiet peace. Although several dozen participants were expected, we were almost alone in our arrival and enjoyed a relaxed, warm welcome from our fearless leader, Diane Menditto, and Rick and Pat Spana.



Photos credit pages 16-18
Diane Menditto, OFS and Ed Wojciechowski, OFS



After a much-needed power nap and a little unpacking, I paid an equally refreshing visit to the Blessed Sacrament chapel, right down the hall from my spacious cell. Before leaving, I turned to the large Bible on its pedestal near the tabernacle.

With a prayer to the Holy Spirit, I closed my eyes and opened to a random page; my hand touched the opening verses from Matthew 8, Jesus' healing of a leper ("go and show yourself to the priest"). I filed that away in my heart and ran downstairs to the conference room, buzzing with old friends becoming reacquainted and newcomers being welcomed, for the 7:00 p.m. start of our retreat.

In his warm welcoming remarks, the retreat center's guardian, Father Rock, quoted Pope Francis' coat of arms, in English: "You mercied me, and you called me." The presence of our Holy Father Pope Francis, our Seraphic Father's namesake, was felt throughout the weekend. After evening prayer (with the weekend's liturgy of the hours from *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise*; music handouts were distributed and our retreat began. Father Tom Hartle, OFM, our retreat master and the beloved former pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Butler, proceeded to give talks that were deeply engaging—and challenging. "The Benedictines have their rule; the Dominicans have theology; the Jesuits have the exercises (and now, a pope!); but we Franciscans have a person—Francis!"

continued on next page

RETREAT 2015

continued from page 16

An entertaining story-teller, Father Tom reminded us of many familiar Franciscan legends and Gospel passages, often with a new, thought-provoking twist. Father drew numerous parallels between Jesus' ministry and Saint Francis'. Jesus "crossed over" into the pagan territory of the Gerasenes to heal a young man afflicted by a legion of demons, and commissioned him to stay behind to share the *Good News*; and Francis risked his life to meet with al-Kamil, the sultan of Egypt, during the fifth Crusade. Neither excluded anyone—in Francis' case, neither *minores* nor *majores*, neither Muslims nor lepers—and I thought, with a pleasant shiver, of the Gospel passage I had read earlier in the chapel. There are no coincidences!

We were invited to share our life-changing moments, ranging from the joys of parenthood to "the grace of devastation," and entrusted by Father with his own such times.

Our brothers and sisters spoke of loved ones lost and lives saved, and of wisdom gained through great challenges, whether physical, personal, or spiritual.

Father urged us to respond to the language of the Holy Spirit in creative ways, and he stirred us with challenging questions:

—ARE WE FRANCISCANS CALLED TO BE AN ALTERNATIVE TO RUIN?
 ("Francis, go rebuild my Church, which you can see is falling into ruins.")

—IS IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE GOD PLACES WHERE GOD DOES NOT BELONG?

—"WHO ARE YOU, O LORD? AND WHO AM I?"



As Secular Franciscans, there are three things we can do, Father Tom pointed out, that both Jesus and Francis did:

- to **touch**, even when it means crossing uncrossable lines;
- to **listen**, as Jesus listened to blind Bartimaeus and Francis to the wolf and the people of Gubbio;
- and to **give** everyone we meet a sense of belonging.



There are no scapegoats, and no one is untouchable, or marginalized, or excommunicated. By touching others' lives in joy and in love, we can heal wounds, restore what is broken—in short, work miracles.

continued on next page



RETREAT 2015

THERE WERE ADDITIONAL BLESSINGS



AND GRACE-FILLED MOMENTS:

‡ Gathering for our hearty meals with treasured “crossroads friends” from previous years’ retreats and other regional and cluster events.

‡ The carillon in early morning, playing “May Christ Find a Dwelling Place”.

‡ A lovely liturgy for the feast day of the Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula, celebrated by Father Sam Monaco, OFS, with a stirring homily from Deacon Luke Conroy, OFS, and a gifted candidate named Stan leading us in song; “Christ, Be our Light” echoes on, days later.

‡ Who will forget Sunday morning, when Alex and Carol led singing and dancing outdoors to “Canticle of the Sun”?

‡ Opportunities for quiet time included celebrating reconciliation, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, roaming the beautiful grounds in the August heat, exploring the lovely chapel (actually a good-sized church, attached to the retreat house both front and back) with all its beautiful statues and stained-glass windows.

‡ Evening socials were well attended; on Saturday evening, several of us watched a deeply disturbing, but ultimately inspiring Oscar-nominated documentary about world-traveling photographer Sebastião Salgado, *The Salt of the Earth*.

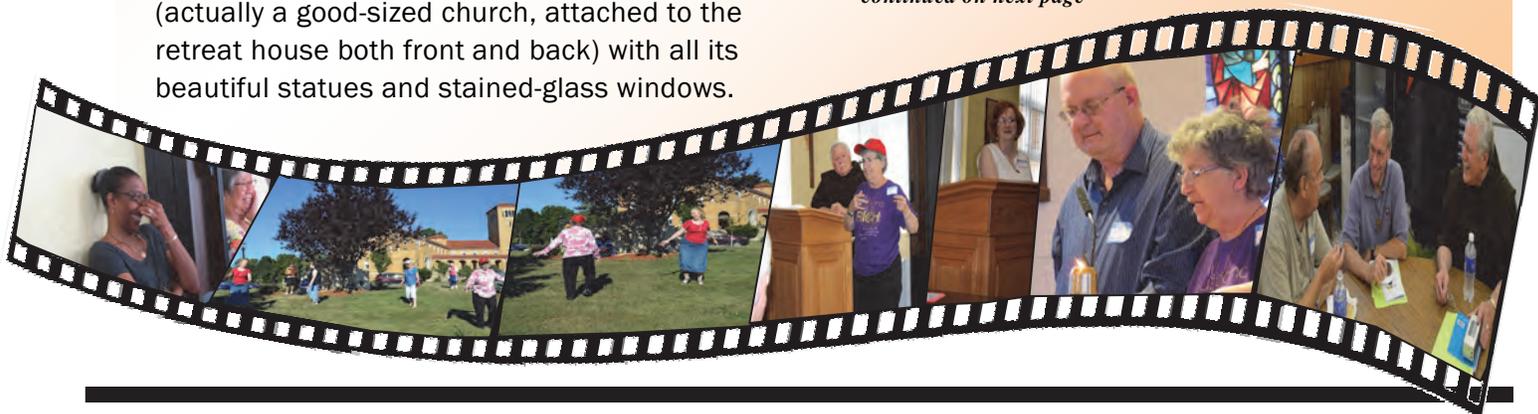
‡ Outside, the evenings offered their own gifts: a full moon and lively fireflies (and a mosquito or two!).

‡ The multi-layered horizon punctuated by brief cascades of bright colored lights, maybe from a distant carnival.

‡ The rhythm of katydids and the whistles of distant trains, along with the messages from our Franciscan charism and many blessed encounters, made sleeping peaceful.

The weekend at Mount Alvernia fulfilled all the joys and hopes that the word *retreat* offers.

continued on next page



RETREAT 2015

continued from page 18

WELCOMING IMAGES



One thing I like best about the retreat house at Mount Alvernia is the extraordinary collection of art works displayed in every nook and cranny—icons, statues, hand-wrought woodwork (including the beautifully rough-hewn tabernacle in the third-floor chapel), prints of paintings familiar and un-

As in the great art museums, it's almost overwhelming, with so many wonderful treasures in each hallway and gathering space that you can easily miss what might move you the most. I was already looking forward to revisiting prints of two favorite Rembrandts in the dining room, one probably larger than the original painting.

As I lugged my gym bag down the shadowy hall to the elevator—we women, even seculars, tend to over-pack—I spied a beautiful print of Saint Francis, being cradled (in ecstasy, I tried to recall, or in submission to Sister Death?) by a dark-eyed angel. I paused to reflect on this mysterious, moving image, when around the corner came a friar with merry brown eyes, pulling on his habit over his summer clothes.

"That artist..." he began. "Is it Caravaggio?" I asked—interrupting being a bad habit of mine. "Yes, you know him?—He did a beautiful painting of the call of Saint Matthew."

"Oh, I love that painting!" I said, picturing it and thinking of my son Matthew, who introduced me to that image.

"Well, it was while looking at that painting that Pope Francis first felt called to his vocation," Father told me.

As it turned out, this kind friar was Father Rock, the guardian of the retreat center; this early encounter was both welcome and welcoming. It was also the first of many times during the weekend that the spirit of our Holy Father Pope Francis, our Seraphic Father's namesake, seemed present with us.



UPCOMING

EVENTS

'FRANCIS WEEK' KEYNOTE TALK:



UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING LAUDATO SI'

FR. LAWRENCE HAYES O.F.M.,
vicar provincial of Holy Name

Province and parochial vicar at the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, will be a keynote speaker for Francis Week 2015. Fr. Larry will be speaking about Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudato Si*.

Fr. Larry writes: "I believe," writes Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, "that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically." (10 *Laudato Si*).

As we approach the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, please join us for a discussion of the Pope's recent encyclical that focuses on care for God's Creation.

We will highlight the principal themes and key points of *Laudato Si*, and then explore practical ways to respond to this timely and much-needed message.

"An integral ecology is made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness." (230 *Laudato Si*).

ALL ARE WELCOME. NO RSVP REQUIRED.

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Location: San Damiano Hall

**Church of Saint Francis of Assisi
135 West 31st Street
New York, NY 10001**

NAFRA — JPIC

NATIONAL JPIC ANIMATOR - CAROLYN TOWNES

<http://animatepeace.blog.com>

GREETINGS OF PEACE, DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

I pray this finds you well and filled with the peace of our Lord!

• I am pleased to announce **SISTER CARITAS BARAJINGITWA, LSOSF** as the recipient of the **2015 JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION AWARD**. I have been informed that Sr. Caritas will be with us at the National Chapter to receive her award.

• **SEASON OF CARING FOR CREATION — PRAYERS FOR 1 SEPTEMBER — 4 OCTOBER**

Prayers may be found on our OLTAR region website at

http://ourladyoftheangelsregion.org/Franciscan_Season_of_Caring_for_Creation.pdf

• **12 WEEKS OF FRANCISCAN PEACE — PRAYERS FOR 3 OCTOBER — 25 DECEMBER**

Prayers may be found on our OLTAR region website at

<http://www.ourladyoftheangelsregion.org/JPIC.html>

Wishing you blessings of peace and all good, **Carolyn Townes, OFS**

UPCOMING EVENTS



As a member of the Franciscan Family in the New York City area, *Franciscans International (FI)* is pleased to invite you to an upcoming gathering.

We would like to share our mission at the UN, to learn about the commitment of the Franciscans in the area, and to reflect on ways to collaborate.

We are delighted to Welcome
CAROLYN TOWNES, OFS
National JPIC Animator
of the
Secular Franciscan Order, USA.

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2015

Time: 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

Location: San Damiano Hall

Church of Saint Francis of Assisi
135 West 31st Street
New York, NY 10001

Please RSVP by email or phone
if you wish to attend.

Sr. Odile Coirier, OFS

Franciscans International
Email: o.coirier@fiop.org
Phone: 917-270-8922

Light refreshments will be served.

RECENT EVENTS

by
JOSEPH WILSON, OFS
Most Holy Name Fraternity
Little Falls, NJ

T RANSITUS OF ST. CLARE

On August 10, 2015, the Most Holy Name fraternity in Little Falls, NJ, invited its members and other members of the Franciscan community in Northern New Jersey to celebrate the Transitus of St. Clare of Assisi at Holy Angels Church in Little Falls. About 50 people gathered to celebrate St. Clare's passing to eternal life.



Based on the writings about St. Clare's last few days with her sisters and her death, the prayer was led by the fraternity's minister, Fr. Samuel Monaco, OFS, as the community joined together in song and prayer in honor of Francis' Little Plant. Rev. Richard Husted, OFM, Parochial Vicar at St. Mary's Church in Pompton Lakes, NJ, shared a reflection on the influences and impact Clare had on his life and within the lives of women in the Church through history. He helped the community to reflect on how she became the "mirror image of Francis" in Assisi and to the world.



Debbie Wickham, OFS, a member of Most Holy Name Fraternity, said, "Clare's effect on the women of her day and her effect on Fr. Richard's life shows how the life of one person can influence the world even today."

The Transitus of St. Clare ended with the veneration of her relic by those gathered while singing a litany about who Clare is in the Franciscan community and the Church.

Following the service, those gathered enjoyed fellowship in the parish hall.



Photography: Diane Menditto, OFS

RECENT EVENTS

by
TONI MACONI, OFS
Little Portion Fraternity
Mount Vernon, NY

TRANSITUS OF ST. CLARE

Two Franciscan communities came together on Sunday, August 9TH, to mark the *Transitus* of St. Clare. Members of the Little Portion Secular Franciscan Fraternity, based in Mount Vernon, N.Y., arrived at the Poor Clare Monastery in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., at 3:00 P.M., bearing beautiful roses for the chapel and a potluck feast.

The sisters and fraternity members were joined by Fr. André Cirino, OFM, spiritual assistant to the Little Portion fraternity, and several members of the Most Holy Stigmata Fraternity in Wappingers Falls.

After dinner, dessert and fellowship, all retreated to the sisters' chapel, where a simple *Transitus* ceremony was read by members of the Little Portion Fraternity.



The setting was perfect; the chapel's huge windows looked out over peaceful woods and lovely summer flowers.

Fr. André then shared some insights about St. Clare and the Poor Clare monastery in Assisi, providing a sense of place to the visitors. He told the story of St. Clare's life in Assisi, and her impact on the entire world.

Photos credit: Toni Maconi, OFS



WAITING FOR THE TRANSITUS OF ST. CLARE TO BEGIN IN THE CHAPEL AT THE POOR CLARE MONASTERY IN WAPPINGERS FALLS ON AUGUST 9TH.

It was a fitting way to mark the *Transitus*, which is traditionally held on August 11, but more important, it brought together four branches of the Franciscan family – Poor Clares, Secular Franciscans, Order of Friars Minor, and Third Order Regulars, for fellowship and prayer. Members from all the Orders were present for the *Transitus*.



A cake brought by one of the Little Portion Secular Franciscans, to celebrate the *Transitus* of St. Clare.

FRATERNAL TIDINGS

by
DAVE ENGELHAUPT, OFS
St. Anthony Fraternity
Butler, NJ

“SHUT UP SHUT DOWN”

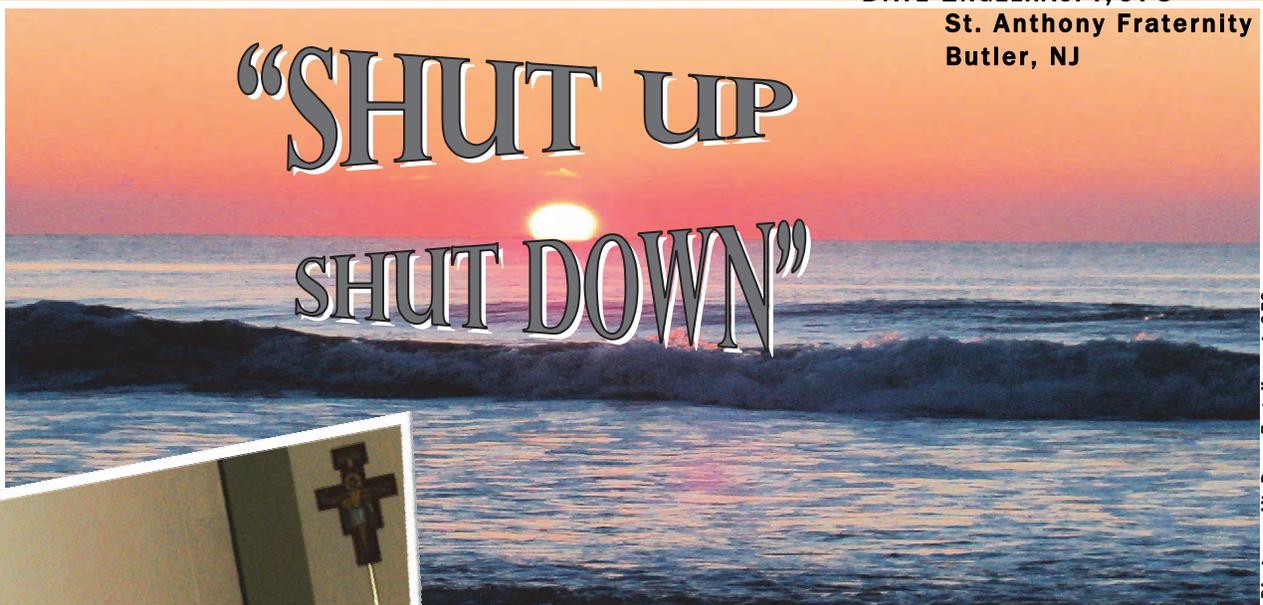
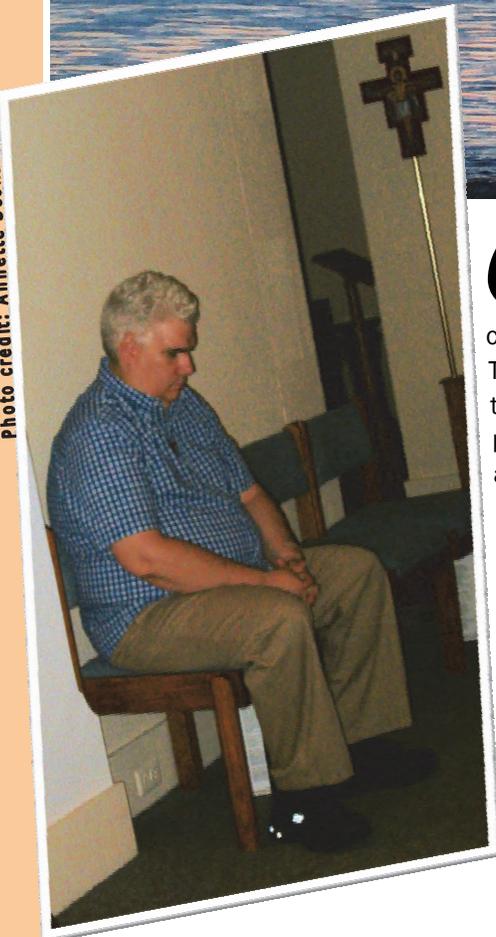


Photo credit: Dave Engelhaupt, OFS

Photo credit: Annette Scollante



Our world is full of consumption. Pope Francis speaks of our consumer consumption often. There is another consumption the world is caught up in, that of talking incessantly. The cell-phone is always out, constantly keeping the world in touch with noise. The noise cannot be solely blamed on cell-phone usage. Go anywhere and you'll find someone talking—about nothing — gossip. You've probably have heard the roar before Holy Mass begins; what has happened to being silent before Mass?

We are instructed by the Instruction of the Mass, Article 45, "To observe Sacred Silence before the celebration itself. To be observed in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas. So, that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner."

Yet many times there are conversations in the Sacristy, in the vesting room and adjacent areas. There are the faithful who come in talking or some seeking someone to speak to.

During the Mass, there are periods when a silence is observed— people wonder what is going on. We are instructed to observe silence in the Penitential Act, the invitation to pray, after a reading or homily, and after communion. The St. Anthony of Padua Butler Choir of angelic voices perform a meditative song, allowing one to go deeply into this type of silence in order to praise God in our hearts and minds and in prayer to Him. For those who applaud afterwards, you hope that it is an accumulation of the happiness in their hearts and minds after praying to God.

Silence happens in prayer of the Shorter Christian Prayer, in private, and in my fraternity, St. Anthony Fraternity in Butler, NJ we observe a silence, a reflective after the minister has read from the Secular Franciscan rule, whatever the Holy Spirit has inspired.

continued on next page

FRATERNAL TIDINGS

continued from page 23

Father Emmet Murphy, our Spiritual Assistant, observes Sacred Silence. He walks out of the Sacristy and takes a seat in a pew about ten to fifteen minutes ahead and sits in silence. As he says, "We need to shut up and shut down to allow God into our hectic lives. All the hustle and bustle that we endure needs be put aside to enter into a relationship with God for Mass, for the celebration together."

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I've grown in my ministry of service of over fifteen years, from just going up after the mass, to before and after mass. To being invited by the priest to stay and serve as an altar server, or Eucharistic minister or Lector. My ministry of service began one day after our then second-morning mass, when Father Bernard Creighton, OFM, was all alone. I felt a "push" to go and help him. That opened the door. The 12:10 Mass was the next step, with the door open, I got to know the Franciscans and was soon called to more than serving at the mass, but to also become a Eucharistic Minister to parish shut-ins. My time with them was one of pure joy. The Secular Franciscan Order came along too. It has been a pleasure serving with and visiting so many wonderful people. All through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, who I believe isn't done with me yet.

The reason I can give of my time to serve at Mass is that I suffer from fibromyalgia and an underlying condition that cannot be treated with medication, for the medication can cause blood clots; I also have another condition called Factor V Leyden that predisposes me to blood clots. It also amplifies the fibromyalgia, and my worrying also brings on the pain. So enough to say that my condition makes working very difficult. This is my world. I shouldn't allow myself to let intrusions get on my nerves, but it's hard work not to let the distractions invade with the talkers, doors slamming, and kneelers banging up and down. Finding peace of mind is hard in this world. It's hard work to be silent. Hard to just let the silence take over. The silence needed before mass.

Just think of all the times St. Francis was observing silence—

What must God have given him?

What are we not allowing God to tell us when we allow the world to distract us by not being silent?

I've observed Sacred Silence before, but on February 26th, I received a gift from God in the form of a vision that enables me to overcome whatever difficulties I am feeling; a vision that I now use for finding a deeper peace.

God has given me this vision as an instrument for my own peace. I've used this gift to calm myself down many times, and I'm sure that the next time the world gnaws at me, there will be a time to be silent, and in the silence God will speak to me again. I now know the importance of silence not just before mass, not just during mass, not just in a fraternity gathering, but at all the times around us.

St. Mother Teresa has been quoted as saying,

"The fruit of silence is Prayer.

The fruit of prayer is Faith.

The fruit of faith is Love.

The fruit of love is Service.

The fruit of service is Peace!"

Her words ring true with the many gifts given to me. Silence is needed in our lives to bring us closer to God, to be given gifts like St. Francis was given in his stillness and his silence.

Father Emmet's words, "To shut up and to shut down" allows God to speak to us. The world of today demands that we be observers of silence. St. Francis taught that we "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." We need to be the ones to observe the silence; to be the examples for others to see.

May your relationship of dialogue between God and you through the Holy Spirit bring about an Instrument of Peace.

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THE GIFT

God spoke to me through pictures.

While observing Sacred Silence, the external world quickly went silent, and my inner mind soon closed down.

I saw a rock emerged in shallow water, an oval rock, dark gray with tiny white specks. I pick the rock up; I feel how smooth it is. I show the rock to a mystery woman, and I place the rock back kicking up a bit of sand. The water bounds out and the rock looks the same as before I picked it up. The woman's feet move up and down, and I hear giggling. I turn away and I see children of various races playing on the sandy beach.

A noise intrudes, but I shook it off. My sight moves to the shoreline and I follow it until it reaches the widest stretch of the beach, where the children had been.

Quickly taken away, I see grayish white smoke in the sky and looking down, I see it snaking up over the trees, down further I see darkened tree trunks, and looking up I see a shack standing on wooden pedestals, with three wood paneled walls, the closest wall is metal.

I view it like I was walking, and I see a hammock, near to it a rack of fish drying, and inside I see fish cooking in a cast iron skillet, atop of pot belly stove.

Another noise intrudes, then back to the woman, a fish swims around her legs, she bends down, touches the fish, it swims between her legs and then through her hands. I bend over and pick the fish up, I look at its mouth flapping open and close, and I gently put it back into the water.

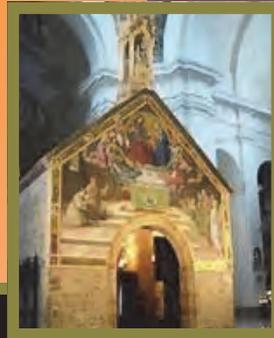
My first thought was what a peaceful place. A great place to visit when the world invades. My thought was of the rock, how the rock looked undisturbed. The sand displaced was gone forever. I thought even the smallest intrusion cannot take me back to way things were before.

The rock itself with white specks represent people, the shut-ins that I use to visit with Holy Communion. This was another time in my life when I observed silence, allowing them to speak. The metal wall was to the storm side, something I need be stronger about. I realized that some fish I need to consume and others I need to let go of. I let go of the anger and the worry. So much to look at through reflection and meditation.

I feel that God gave me this gift, this vision, so I may have a place to go to and relax my mind, as well as give me a place to consume me when the world gnaws at me. The nature of this silence, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to see.



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